

INTRODUCTION TO THE PRELIMINARY DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This Preliminary Draft Environmental Assessment (PDEA) provides the analysis required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) needed to support relicensing of the Oroville Facilities, previously known as the Feather River Project or the Oroville Division, State Water Facilities. The Oroville Facilities are located on the Feather River in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Butte County, California. Oroville Dam is located 5 miles east of the City of Oroville and about 130 miles northeast of San Francisco. The Oroville Facilities project boundary is shown on Figure I-1, located in the Figures Volume (VII) provided as part of this document.

The existing license for the Oroville Facilities (issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission [FERC], on February 11, 1957) will expire on January 31, 2007. The California Department of Water Resources (DWR), through the Alternative Licensing Procedures (ALP), is seeking a new federal license to continue generating hydroelectric power while continuing to meet existing commitments and comply with regulations pertaining to water supply, flood control, the environment, and recreational opportunities. This PDEA contains evaluations of three alternatives: a No-Action Alternative, Alternative 1 (referred to in this document as the Proposed Action), and Alternative 2.

The PDEA presents the analysis and conclusions reached during the evaluation of the three alternatives, with supplemental information on relevant studies, data, and methodology included in the appendices. A list of the 71 Study Plans developed through the ALP in support of relicensing the Oroville Facilities is provided at the end of Chapter 11.0. Reports completed for each Study Plan are listed beneath the Study Plan with which they are associated. Some of these Study Plan Reports are referred to in the text of the PDEA; these reports are included as supplemental information and can be found at the Oroville Facilities public website, <http://orovillirelicensing.water.ca.gov>.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PDEA

Chapter 1.0, Application, provides a description of the existing facilities and their locations.

Chapter 2.0, Purpose of Action and Need for Power, defines the Proposed Action's purpose and need under NEPA. This chapter identifies needs and commitments related to power, water supply, flood management, recreation, and environmental benefits.

Chapter 3.0, Proposed Action and Alternatives, provides an overview of the existing Oroville Facilities as well as current operations, environmental commitments, and programs that would continue under the No-Action Alternative. This chapter also describes the Proposed Action and Alternative 2 and describes alternatives and protection, mitigation, and enhancement (PM&E) measures considered but eliminated from further evaluation.

Chapter 4.0, Consultation and Compliance, provides background on the Collaborative ALP, study scoping, and resource agency consultation and describes federal and State laws and regulations that are relevant to the Oroville Facilities.

Chapter 5.0, Environmental Consequences, includes a description of the general locale and contains subsections describing the affected environment and environmental analyses conducted by the applicant covering resource area-specific topics under each alternative.

Chapter 6.0, Developmental and Economic Analysis, describes the power and economic benefits of the project and analyses the cost impacts of potential operational changes and PM&E measures included within each alternative.

Chapter 7.0, Comprehensive Development Analysis and Recommendations, provides information to compare developmental and nondevelopmental uses of resources to determine which alternative is in the best interests of the public. Sometimes referred to as the “balancing” section, this information is used by FERC to give equal consideration to all uses of the waterway on which the project is located.

Chapter 8.0, Recommendations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, includes any recommendations received from State and federal fish and wildlife agencies pursuant to the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act.

Chapter 9.0, Consistency with Comprehensive Plans, identifies relevant comprehensive plans and explains how and why the project would or would not comply with such plans.

Chapter 10.0, Finding of No Significant Impact, identifies whether the project, based on the environmental analysis, would significantly affect the human environment.

Chapter 11.0, Literature Cited, provides a list of literature cited.

Chapter 12.0, List of Preparers, provides a list of preparers.

Chapter 13.0, List of Recipients, provides a list of recipients who have been notified of the availability of the license application, including this PDEA.

Appendices A–I (bound separately) provide detailed information as follows:

- Appendix A—Consultation and Compliance
- Appendix B—Project Description/Information
- Appendix C—Modeling Tools and Results
- Appendix D—Information for Proposed PM&E Measures
- Appendix E—Biological Assessments and Opinions

- Appendix F—Supporting Information for Related Actions
- Appendix G—Resource Area—Specific Appendices
- Appendix H—List of Proposed Plans and Programs
- Appendix I— Draft Recreation Management Plan

Figures Volume (bound separately) includes color figures to accompany the main PDEA document.

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